BRITISH COLUMBIA

NEWS RELEASE

Ministry of Forests and Range

2006FOR0018-000274
March 27, 2006

LOG EXPORTS TO BENEFIT COASTAL FIRST NATIONS

VICTORIA – The government has granted a log export request from the Heiltsuk First Nation to help support a proposed dry land wood sort north of Bella Bella, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today.

"This project has the potential to create jobs not only for First Nations but other coastal operators," said Coleman. "I'm pleased government can assist the Heiltsuk people in pursuing their economic goals."

For one year, the First Nations community and other licence holders in the Mid-Coast Timber Supply Area will be permitted to export up to 35 per cent of their harvest. As a result, cutting will become more economical, support more logging jobs and help to finance the Heiltsuk log sort.

"We needed export approval to participate more fully in the coastal forest economy," said Art Sterritt, executive director of Coastal First Nations, which includes Heiltsuk membership. "Building a dry land sort will create local jobs for our people and help us plan for the future."

The proposed facility at Norman Morrison Bay will handle up to 200,000 cubic metres of timber per year and will be open to all operators in the area. The project will particularly benefit small firms that aren't currently logging because they can't afford to barge their timber to Vancouver for sorting.

Over the past few years, the annual harvest in the mid-coast area has been under 1 million cubic metres. The 65 per cent of timber that's not marked for export must be used domestically, supporting employment in coastal communities.

The Central Coast and North Coast Land and Resource Management Plan also sustains forestry jobs while protecting nearly 1.8 million hectares of wilderness and Spirit Bear habitat. Announced Feb. 7, it sets the stage for Ecosystem Based Management – a framework that balances the need for a healthy economy with a healthy environment.

B.C. log export restrictions remain among the strictest in Canada. The volume of public timber exported as logs is a fraction of the annual harvest of public timber – generally less than 2.5 per cent.

-30-

Media contact:
Max Cleeveley
Communications Director
Ministry of Forests and Range
250 387-8486

Art Sterritt
Executive Director
Coastal First Nations
250 615-9110

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.